



### **Writer Mark Sundeen: Literary non-fiction**

Mark Sundeen comments on his artistry, "I wondered if there was yet a part of my country that valued timeless elements like a participation in the cycles of nature, artistic expression, religious transcendence. What unites my work thematically is the search for authenticity amidst the simulated. My first book tells of a wanderer in the American West who, instead of swooning at the majesty of the much-romanticized panoramas, is flummoxed by its grid of highways, waste sites, and tourist traps. Yet the people within that landscape of disillusion are more compelling than the myths. Where *Car Camping* tells the story of a traveler finding his place amidst the desert's detritus, *The Making of Toro*, tells of an author sifting through a century of literary genres and clichés in order to fabricate a unique voice. *The Man Who Quit Money* is about a man whose reaction to his synthetic society is to attempt to live like the Biblical heroes and ancient prophets, to retire to a desert cave and stop using money altogether."

When responding to his artistic innovation, Mark writes, "My literary work represents an innovation in the genre of creative nonfiction that has been developing over the past four decades...a genre that blends memoir, journalism, and essay, and does so with a novelist's knack for narrative arc, character, voice, and theme."

"My books intentionally blur the boundaries between genre. In *Car Camping*, I jettisoned the clear-eyed reporter of travel tales for an unreliable, biased, stymied and largely fictional narrator. *The Making of Toro* is simultaneously a parody of a "behind the scenes" memoir, an experimental novel about the interplay between art, illusion and reality, and a bumbling narrative of a trip through Mexico and California looking for bullfights. Perhaps the best indicator that my innovations were a success is that while both books were listed as nonfiction in the U.S., they were published in Europe as novels."

"As a reporter, I have researched and told the story of Daniel Suelo, a man who successfully stopped using money (as well as barter and debt) more than a decade ago. As a memoirist, I have included the story of my own years of disillusion with money, of contemplative drifting, and of my friendship with Suelo. And as an essayist I have synthesized religious, economic and political thought to explain how Suelo's life follows traditions as old as Buddha and Jesus, and as young as Thoreau."

The panel found a striking pleasure in reading Mark's submission. They felt his writing was topically very innovative and timely. They saw strong and dynamic writing and responded to its experimental quality. Of his work, the panel said it was really alive - an atypical western voice that is compelling.